

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO VALIDATE THE  
GENERIC NAME "HEMIPROCNE" AS FROM NITZSCH, 1829  
(CLASS AVES)

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The object of the present application is to seek from the International Commission a Ruling in regard to the application to be given to the generic name *Hemiprocne*, doubts on this subject having called in question the names properly applicable to three distinct genera of birds, namely the Whiskered Tree-swifts, the Edible-nest Swiftlets, and the Collared Swifts.

2. Up to 1906 the generic name *Hemiprocne* was commonly treated as having been first published by Nitzsch in 1840 and was used for the Collared Swifts, while the Whiskered Swifts were referred to the genus *Macropteryx* Swainson, [1831] (*Zool. Illustr.* (2) 2(11) : pl. 47) (type species, by monotypy : *Hirundo longipennis* Rafinesque, 1802, *Bull. Sci. Soc. philomat. Paris* No. 68 : 153). In 1906, however, Oberholser (*Proc. biol. Soc. Wash.* 19 : 67—69) advanced the argument that the name *Hemiprocne* ought to be accepted as from Nitzsch, 1829 (*Observationes de Avium Arteria carotide communi* : 31), where, however, it had appeared only in the nominative plural as "*Hemiprocnes*". At that time there existed no clear provision in the *Règles* on the question whether, in order to be available, a generic name must actually have been published in the nominative singular and Oberholser took the view that this was not an essential requirement, guiding himself in this matter by Canon VI of the Code of Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union which accepted such plural usage as valid and provided (in the attendant remarks) for change to the required nominative singular. From the species cited by Nitzsch in 1829 for his "*Hemiprocnes*" Oberholser selected *Hirundo longipennis* Rafinesque, 1802 (cited by Nitzsch as "*Cypselus longipennis* Temminck") as type species. Under this arrangement the name *Hemiprocne* (emend. of *Hemiprocnes*) Nitzsch, 1829, became the oldest available name for the Whiskered Tree-swifts, the name previously used, *Macropteryx* Swainson, [1832], falling as a junior synonym. The removal of the name *Hemiprocne* from the Collared Swifts left that genus without a name. Oberholser accordingly published the new name *Streptoprocne* Oberholser, 1906 (*Proc. biol. Soc. Wash.* 19 : 69) for this genus, designating *Hirundo zonaris* Shaw, 1796 (in Miller, *Cimelia physica* : 100) as type species.

3. Oberholser's arrangement came into general use, but has been found to be incorrect under the *Règles* on the basis of *Opinion* 183 (1944, *Ops. Decis. int. Comm. zool. Nomencl.* 3 : 13—24), which ruled that a generic name does not acquire a status of availability until it is published in the nominative

singular. It is necessary therefore to examine the later literature for the purpose of determining as from what date and in what sense the generic name *Hemiprocne* was first validly published.

4. The first use of the name *Hemiprocne* subsequent to 1829 is also very questionable in character, though for different reasons. This was by Nitzsch (1833, *Pterylographia Avium* (1) : 21) who gave anatomical characters for a number of genera, including *Hemiprocne*, but did not cite any one character as distinguishing *Hemiprocne* from the other genera cited. Whether or not such indiscriminating treatment can properly be accepted as providing for the generic name *Hemiprocne* an "indication" as required by Proviso (a) to Article 25 of the *Règles* is a matter which can be settled only by the Commission. The name *Hemiprocne* as of Nitzsch, 1833, has generally been treated by subsequent authors as a *nomen nudum*, though, as Nitzsch gave characters jointly for this and other genera, it is not an absolute *nomen nudum*, though a virtual one. If this generic name were to be ruled available as from Nitzsch, 1833, for which no type selection has ever been made, it would be possible to select a type species which would be in harmony with existing usage.

5. The name *Hemiprocne* was next used in 1838 (*Leitfaden für Realschulen und Gymnasien* : 34) when Riemann applied it to a single species "*H. esculenta*, die indianische Schwalbe". By this action the nominal species *Hirundo esculenta* Linnaeus, 1758 (*Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10) 1 : 191) became the type species, by monotypy, of the genus *Hemiprocne*, if Riemann is treated as the first author validly to publish this generic name. On this basis the name *Hemiprocne* would become the oldest available generic name for the Edible-nest Swiftlets and would replace the name *Collocalia* Gray (G.R.), 1840 (*List. Gen. Birds* : 8), of which also *Hirundo esculenta* Linnaeus, 1758, is type species by monotypy.

6. In 1840 (*System der Pterylographie* : 31, 123) Nitzsch again used the generic name *Hemiprocne*, on this occasion in acceptable form. He cited two species as belonging to this genus. One of these species, then cited as "*Hirundo collaris* Temm." (i.e. *Hirundo collaris* Wied, 1820 (*Reise nach Brasilien* 1 : 75)) was selected by Gray (G.R.), 1855 (*Cat. Gen. Subgen. Birds* : 12) as the type species of the genus *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1840. If this usage of *Hemiprocne* were to be accepted, that generic name would become the oldest available generic name for the Collared Swifts and would replace the substitute name *Streptoprocne* published by Oberholser in 1906 (see paragraph 2 above); for *Hirundo zonaris* Shaw, 1796, the type species of *Streptoprocne* Oberholser, is considered to be the same species as *Hirundo collaris* Wied, the type species of *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1840.

7. Oberholser (1906, *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 19 : 68) proposed the family name HEMIPROCNIIDAE to replace the then current MACROPTERYGIDAE, basing the name on *Hemiprocne* (emend. of *Hemiprocnes*) of Nitzsch, 1829. HEMIPROCNIIDAE thereupon came into general usage and is still current. Any change

in the present application of the name *Hemiprocne* would, therefore, present an added source of confusion in family names. I can find no family names based on usages of *Hemiprocne* subsequent to 1829 which are herein proposed as *nomina rejecta*. The other two genera of swifts involved in the present petition belong to the family APODIDAE and their current generic names have had no family names based thereon as far as I can determine.

8. I have discussed the details of the present proposals with Dr. Dean Amadon of this Museum who agrees with the need for action and the solution advanced.

9. Under strict application of the *Règles*, except for the complication offered by the 1833 reference (paragraph 4 above), it appears that the name *Hemiprocne* must be credited to Riemann (1838) and replace the name *Collocalia* for the Edible-nest Swiftlets, while the Whiskered Tree-swifts, now known as *Hemiprocne* would revert to the name *Macropteryx*, by which they were known prior to Oberholser's paper of 1906. If the Riemann (1838) usage as well as the earlier usages by Nitzsch were to be officially rejected, the name *Hemiprocne*, ranking from Nitzsch (1840) would replace *Streptoprocne* for the Collared Swifts, *Macropteryx* would become the name for the Whiskered Tree-swifts, and the Edible-nest Swiftlets would retain the name *Collocalia*. If however the Commission were to validate the name *Hemiprocne* as from Nitzsch (1829), that name would become the valid name for the Whiskered Tree-swifts, and the Edible-nest Swiftlets and the Collared Swifts would retain the names (*Collocalia* and *Streptoprocne*) by which they are currently known. In the interests of stability this is the course which I recommend the Commission to take. Such action would moreover be in harmony with the general principle laid down by the Commission that it is particularly desirable to prevent the changing of names as the result of changes in, or of new interpretations of, the *Règles*, for in the present case it was only the interpretation of Article 8 given in *Opinion* 183 (paragraph 3 above) which led to the displacement of the name *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch as the generic name for the Whiskered Tree-swifts.

10. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked :—

- (1) to use its Plenary Powers to validate in the form *Hemiprocne* the generic name published in the nominative plural as *Hemiprocnes* by Nitzsch in 1829 with *Hirundo longipennis* Rafinesque, 1802, as type species ;
- (2) to place the under-mentioned generic names on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* :—
  - (a) *Hemiprocne* (emend. of *Hemiprocnes*) Nitzsch, 1829, as validated under the Plenary Powers under (1) above (gender : feminine) (type species, by designation under the Plenary Powers under (1) above : *Hirundo longipennis* Rafinesque, 1802) ;

- (b) *Collocalia* Gray (G.R.), 1840 (gender : feminine) (type species, by original designation : *Hirundo esculenta* Linnaeus, 1758) ;
- (c) *Streptoprocne* Oberholser, 1906 (gender : feminine) (type species, by original designation : *Hirundo zonaris* Shaw, 1796) ;
- (3) to place the under-mentioned generic names on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* :—
  - (a) *Hemiprocnes* Nitzsch, 1829 (an Invalid Original Spelling of *Hemiprocne*) ;
  - (b) the under-mentioned names, each of which is a junior homonym of *Hemiprocne* (emend. of *Hemiprocnes*) Nitzsch, 1829, as validated under the Plenary Powers under (1) above :—(i) *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1833 ; (ii) *Hemiprocne* Riemann, 1838 ; (iii) *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1840 ;
  - (c) *Macropteryx* Swainson, [1831] (a junior objective synonym of *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1829, as validated under the Plenary Powers under (1) above) ;
- (4) to place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—
  - (a) *longipennis* Rafinesque, 1802, as published in the combination *Hirundo longipennis* (specific name of type species of *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1829) ;
  - (b) *esculenta* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the combination *Hirundo esculenta* (specific name of type species of *Collocalia* Gray (G.R.), 1840) ;
  - (c) *zonaris* Shaw, 1796, as published in the combination *Hirundo zonaris* (specific name of type species of *Streptoprocne* Oberholser, 1906).
- (5) to place the under-mentioned family-group name on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology* : HEMIPROCNIDÆ Oberholser, 1906 (type genus : *Hemiprocne* Nitzsch, 1829).